

Message Text

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15 64

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 PER-05 OPR-02 NIC-01

AID-20 EA-11 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

OC-06 CCO-00 A-01 FBO-01 OMB-01 SY-10 USSS-00 RSR-01

/169 W

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R 291039Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0799

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

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CORRECTED COPY - TEXT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, BG

SUBJECT: NAP/B HARTAL

1. SUMMARY: EIGHT-HOUR HARTAL (GENERAL STRIKE) CALLED BY BHASHANI'S NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY (NAP/B) AND STRIDENTLY CONDEMNED BY AWAMI LEAGUE WAS MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL TODAY IN DACCA, LARGELY DUE TO THE PASSIVE OBSERVANCE OF THE GENERAL POPULACE AND THE CAUTION OF SHOPKEEPERS. WHILE POPULACE NO DOUBT SHARES BHASHANI'S CONDEMNATION OF LACK OF SECURITY AND HIGH PRICES, THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF HARTAL IS IN NO WAY AN INDICATION OF BHASHANI'S POLITICAL STRENGTH. END SUMMARY.

2. HARTAL WHICH BEGAN AT 0600 WAS FOR THE MOST PART QUIET BUT SCATTERED CLASHES BETWEEN POLICE AND
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NAP/B SUPPORTERS OCCURRED. GOVERNMENT BUSES WERE RUNNING AND CROWDED BUT VERY FEW VEHICLES AND RICKSHAWS OPERATED IN CITY, PARTICULARLY IN DOWNTOWN AREA. CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT OFFICE WORKERS WALKED TO JOBS. EMBASSY CARS, HELD BACK ONE HOUR FOR ROUTINE STAFF PICKUP, WERE UNHINDERED. ONE PRIVATE AMERICAN REPORTED BEING STOPPED IN HIS CAR BUT ALLOWED TO PROCEED. AN EMBASSY LOCAL ON FOOT WAS CHALLENGED ENROUTE BUT ALSO LET GO. SUPPOSEDLY AWAMI LEAGUERS WERE FORCING SHOPKEEPERS TO OPEN, BUT MOST SHOPS ALONG BANGABANDHU AVENUE, A MAIN THOROUGHFARE, AND PRIVATE BANKS AND BUSINESSES IN MOTIJHEEL COMMERCIAL AREA WERE CLOSED, EXCEPT FOR PHARMACIES EXEMPTED BY NAP/B, AND NEWS VENDORS AND TEA SHOPS. GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES - UNDER BDG THREAT OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST ABSENTEES -- WERE OPEN AND FUNCTIONING. NO EVIDENCE THAT NAP/B SUPPORTERS WERE OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS. POLICE WERE HIGHLY VISIBLE, BUT THERE WAS LITTLE SIGN OF ARMY OR RAKKHI BAHINI. INITIAL DISTURBANCES WERE LIMITED TO STONE THROWING BY STREET URCHINS, BUT ABOUT 10 A.M. EXPLOSION AND GUN SHOTS HEARD IN SMALL SQUARE NEAR EMBASSY AND LATHI-BEARING YOUTHS WERE SEEN TO SCATTER AS POLICE IN TRUCKS AND JEEPS ARRIVED. WE HAVE NO REPORT OF CASUALTIES ALTHOUGH SOME RUMORS HAVE STARTED TO CIRCULATE. HARTAL WAS CALLED NATIONWIDE. IN NEARBY INDUSTRIAL AREA OF NARAYANGANJ BUSINESS REPORTEDLY WENT ON AS USUAL. US OFFICES IN CHITTAGONG REPORTED THAT ALL BUSINESSES THERE WERE CLOSED, TRANSPORT WAS NOT RUNNING, AND CONSEQUENTLY PORT WAS NOT FUNCTIONING. IN TWO MINOR SKIRMISHES WHEN AWAMI LEAGUERS IN CHITTAGONG TRIED TO FORCE SHOPKEEPERS TO OPEN A FEW PEOPLE WERE ROUGHED UP BUT POLICE ON HAND DID NOT INTERVENE.

2. BHASHANI ANNOUNCED HARTAL THIS DATE OVER MONTH AGO BUT UNTIL PAST WEEKEND THE NAP/B ENGENDERED VERY LITTLE AGITATION AND PUBLICITY. IN RESPONSE, AWAMI LEAGUE, NAP/MUSTAFA, COMMUNIST PARTY BANGLADESH, AND AFFILIATED STUDENT AND LABOR GROUPS BEGAN CONDEMNING HARTAL AND URGING PEOPLE TO RESIST IT. AT MASS
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MEETING YESERDAY AFTERNOON AT BAITUAL MUKARRAM, PARTY LEADERS BITTERLY CONDEMNED BHASHANI AS ANTI-PEOPLE, ANTI-INDEPENDENCE, AND STOOGE OF SINO-PAKISTANI-AMERICAN AGENTS OUT TO UNDERMINE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF BANGLADESH AND "LET LOOSE A REIGN OF ANARCHY IN THE COUNTRY". ZILLUR RAHMAN, GENERAL SECRETARY OF AWAMI LEAGUE, REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE "SAME EVIL FORCES WHO

COLLABORATED WITH PAKISTANI RULERS TO CRUSH" THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE WERE ACTIVE AGAIN. P. BHATTACHARYA, NAP/M GENERAL SECRETARY (BHASHANI IS REPORTEDLY AT HOME SICK) SAID THAT CHINA AND THE U.S. OPPOSED THE FREEDOM OF BANGLADESH AND HELPED THEIR PAKISTANI STOOGES IN UNLEASHING GENOCIDE IN BANGLADESH. ALLEGED THAT NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY (JSD) AND NAP/B RANKS HAVE BEEN FLOODED WITH FORMER RAZAKARS AND AL-BADARS (PAKISTANI MILITIAMEN). S. A. MANIK OF THE CPB CHARGED THAT MAULANA BHASHANI WAS CONSPIRING WITH U.S. AND MAOIST CHINA TO MAKE BANGLADESH FRIENDLESS THROUGH FALSE PROPAGANDA AGAINST INDIA AND SOVIET UNION. IN THE BITTEREST ATTACK ON BHASHANI YET, ABDUR RAZZAK, ORGANIZING SECRETARY OF AWAMI LEAGUE, SAID BHASHANI WAS INSTIGATING ENEMIES OF INDEPENDENCE AND UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP CONSPIRATORIAL FORCES WERE DISRUPTING LAW AND ORDER, INDULGING IN BANK LOOTING AND HIJACKING. RAZZAK ACCUSED THE MAULANA OF HAVING OPPOSED THE SIX POINT MOVEMENT AND ALWAYS BETRAYING THE CAUSE OF 75 MILLION PEOPLE.

3. COMMENT: THE ATTACKS ON BHASHANI ARE BITTEREST YET HEARD AND IN OUR RECOLLECTION FIRST TIME BHASHANI ACCUSED BY NAME AS INSTIGATOR OF LOOTING AND HIJACKING. CONTRARY TO THE HARTAL IN MAY WHERE ATTENTION AND SYMPATHY OF PUBLIC CAPTURED BY BHASHANI'S HUNGER STRIKE, BDG AND AWAMI LEAGUE THIS TIME EVIDENTLY THOUGHT ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO HARTAL WOULD BE EFFECTIVE. SHOPKEEPERS, HOWEVER, MAY HAVE BEEN MORE RESPOONSIVE TO RUMORS THAT GOONDAS (THUGS) WERE COMING TO DACCA TO HELP THEMSELVES TO THE WARES OF ANY STOUTHEARTED BUSINESSMEN WHO OPENED SHOP. IN GENERAL, HARTAL APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PASSIVELY

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 PER-05 OPR-02 NIC-01

AID-20 EA-11 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
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OBSERVED BY MOST OF POPULACE. FOR SOME WORKERS
TRANSPORTATION WAS DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN AND MANY PROBABLY
FEARED VIOLENCE TO THEMSELVES AND PRIVATE VEHICLES,
BUT FOR OTHERS THIS MAY HAVE BEEN OPPORTUNITY FOR DAY
OFF NOT TO BE PASSED UP. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT
PEOPLE SHARE BHASHANI'S CRITICISM OF HIGH PRICES AND
LACK OF SECURITY, BUT THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT
THEY SUPPORT BHASHANI OR NAP/B AS LEADER.

4. FOR SECOND TIME IN FACE OF BHASHANI HARTAL, AWAMI
LEAGUE HAS ALIGNED WITH NAP/M AND CPB. THE "PATRIOTIC
PARTIES" OF AWAMI LEAGUE, NAP/M, AND CPB WHO FIRST
JOINED FORCES IN MAY DURING BHASHANI'S HUNGER STRIKE
ARE INCREASINGLY ACTING IN CONCERT. LAST WEEK AT A
PRO-AWAMI LEAGUE STUDENT LEAGUE NATIONAL CONVENTION,
SHEIKH MUJIB CALLED FOR JOINT ACTION BYT THE AL, NAP/M,
CPB AND RELATED STUDENT GROUPS TO CONFRONT MISCREANTS
AND AGENTS CONSPIRING TO DESTROY THE COUNTRY.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR STRIKES, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973DACCA03904
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730867/aaaajzsb.tel
Line Count: 211
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 17 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Dec-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <08-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 980313
Subject: NAP/B HARTAL
TAGS: ELAB, BG, NAP, PINT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005